



Pinehurst Post

We exist to love Jesus and live for Him.

Volume 4, Issue 9
September 2012

*We envision a
congregation
whose love for
Jesus and one
another leaves
a clear and
compelling
witness for
Christ.*

In Praise of Rhythm by Ryan Reese

It is with absolutely no intentions of bringing you down that I offer up this announcement: Summer is coming to an end. I know, I know, the rain didn't abate until July 3. But I couldn't help but notice how uncomfortable I was yesterday wearing shorts and sandals. We may have many more sunny days ahead, but for most of us the summer is winding down.

And in some ways, it doesn't bother me. In the Reese home, summer could best be described by the word "chaos." Wonderful, pleasure-filled chaos, but chaos nonetheless. We've enjoyed visits by friends and family, traveled all across our beautiful state, climbed mountains, and dug holes on the beach. Many of you have done much the same in the glorious weather God has given, and our paths have crossed less. But over the next month, something is returning that I quite missed—*rhythm*.

I'm not talking about the ability to clap or snap with the music at appropriate times. Some of us cannot retrieve what we never had, and *that* kind of rhythm will always elude us. The rhythm that I miss is the normal ebb and flow of regular life. Students and teachers go back to school. Vacations eventually come to a halt. And we finally get to see more of one another.

A general routine is good for individual Christians and good for the church. Just as you won't benefit physically from a haphazard diet and sporadic attendance at the gym and (to stick with our music theme) you won't become a better musician

without practice, you won't grow spiritually healthy without regularly scheduled "work outs." At home, if we don't have regular times of prayer, Bible study, and service built into our schedules, we often fail to do it at all. As members of the church, if we choose to skip our scheduled "workouts" then the health of our relationships with one another and with God flounder.

This fall the church is offering a very simple rhythm to help keep you dancing in step with Jesus. We don't want to offer too much—a busy church member is not necessarily a healthy church member. But we want you to have sufficient time with other believers to ensure that you are growing healthy in the Lord. Though events may spring up from time to time, like mission trips or outreach projects, these are the "notes" we want to make sure we hit on a weekly basis.

Sunday School. Our normal Sunday school classes begin on Sunday, September 2. LifeWay has introduced a new curriculum that we are very excited about called *The Gospel Project*. Over the next three years everyone in attendance, from preschool to adults, will be studying the big picture of the Bible. As we've learned repeatedly from the book of Hebrews, the whole Bible tells us about Jesus, our Redeemer. The purpose of Sunday school is to devote ourselves to the study of Scripture (Acts 2:42), so make sure to hit this note every week at 9:45 a.m.

Sunday Worship. Every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. we

participate in corporate worship. It is true that every part of our lives is to be an act of worship to God, but Sunday mornings is the special time that we come together, each part of the body, to worship Christ as one. We sing as one, pray as one, contribute gifts, and listen to God's Word proclaimed *together*. This event is not to be neglected (Heb. 10:25).

Devotion Groups. Later in September we will re-launch our small group gatherings. The purpose of our Devotion Groups is to foster the growth of deep Christian fellowship in our church. Though we will discuss the Scriptures together (primarily revisiting the sermon and Sunday school texts), our primary concern is to share our lives together in prayer and encouragement. We will share our struggles and our joys, and pray for one another's challenges in life and ministry. This is a gathering you won't want to miss.

This is the rhythm we'd like you to set your life to in the church. We think that if we play these notes well, we will be equipped to carry out the gospel mission of Jesus Christ in the world around us. What happens when the church is "scattered" is just as important as what happens when we are gathered. But we will be out of sync with Christ's mission to the world, if we don't spend the proper time serving and being served by Christ's body, the church. May God transform us when we are gathered, so that we live boldly for His glory when we are scattered. ~

*And let us consider
how to stir up one
another to love and
good works, not
neglecting to meet
together, as is the
habit of some, but
encouraging one
another, and all
the more as you see
the Day drawing
near. Hebrews*

10:24-25

God is Love by Brian Watson

God is love. These are, perhaps, the most profound, most beautiful, and most abused words of the Bible. The phrase comes from 1 John 4:8 (and it is repeated in verse 16), but it is often removed from the context of 1 John, the New Testament, and the whole Bible. It's an easy phrase for people to distort and then use to justify all kinds of sin. Simply read into the phrase your definition of God and your definition of love, and you have what you want. The person who is having premarital sex says, "It's okay, because we love each other, and God is love." The person who supports same-sex marriage says, "It's okay, because two people who love each other should get married, and, after all, God is love." The person who is being selfish says, "God is teaching me that I need to spend more time loving myself. That's what He would want me to do, because He is love."

I shouldn't have to tell you that all of the quotations above are gross distortions of God's Word. Those ideas don't square with the rest of the Bible, but in order to understand that, you would have to know all that God says about Himself in Scripture. The Bible is, after all, God's revelation of Himself to us, not some words about God that humans fabricated. We must be careful to let God define Himself so that we don't define Him as we like. He made us in His image, not the other way around. When it comes to words like *love*, *faith*, and *believe*, we have to let the Bible define these concepts for us. If you want to know what faith or belief is, you

can't simply read the modern English definition of those words into the Bible. Rather, you should read passages like Romans 4 and Hebrews 11 to see what real faith is like. If you want to know what God's love is like, read all of 1 John, then the rest of the Bible.

John tells us that we know God's love because He sent His Son into the world to die for our sins (1 John 4:9-10; also 1 John 3:16 and, for that matter, John 3:16). If we reflect on this for a moment, this truth tells us that our sin is such a problem, and it requires such atonement, that only the violent and shameful death of Jesus on the cross could make us right with God. And here is the amazing thing: God loved us first (1 John 4:10), while we were still His enemies (Romans 5:6-11). It should astound us to know that God hates sin and evildoers (Psalm 5:5), and yet He chooses to love us so much that He would die for us. This kind of love is not merely a feeling; no, it is active and tough as nails.

In love, God saves us. He loves us so much that He wants to lead us away from sin and towards Himself. In order to lead us in paths of righteousness, He disciplines us (Hebrews 12:5-11) because true love "does not rejoice at wrongdoings" (1 Corinthians 13:6). God wants us to abandon our idols and pursue the end for which He made us: to worship Him in all areas of our lives by obeying His commandments. Yes, we show our love for God by obeying Him (John 14:15, 21, 23 and 1 John 5:2-3).

In his new book, *God Is Love*,

Gerald Bray writes, "God's love for us is deep and all-embracing, but it is not the warmhearted sentimentality that often goes by the name of love today. The love God has for us is like the love of a shepherd for his sheep, as the Bible often reminds us. Sometimes the shepherd can guide his sheep simply by speaking to them and, ideally, that is all that should be needed. But sheep are often slow to respond, and then the shepherd has to nudge them along with his staff. Sometimes he has to grapple with them forcibly and insist that they follow him when they would rather go their own erratic way." God does this because He knows what is best for His sheep. Sometimes, He leads them with His words. Other times, He must use His rod and staff. At all times, He loves us by leading us where we need to go.

God's love for us tells us something about how we should love one another. We must bear with each other while we are in sin, but that doesn't mean we condone sin or tell each other what we want to hear. Rather, we must lovingly confront people when they are sinning and urge them to repent of their sin and turn to God. Our love for one another should be active, not mere lip service (1 John 3:16-18). As God's love seeks what is best for us, so we should seek what is best for each other. The best thing for us is to stop worshiping idols and to start worshiping God by loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. ~